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TO: Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Chairman
Supervisor Gloria Molina
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FROM: J. Tyler McCauley 
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES HARRIS-RODDE
SETTLEMENTS - AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY AND EMERGENCY
DEPARTMENT BOARDING TIME REVIEW FOR QUARTER ENDED
JUNE 2007**

At the request of the Department of Health Services (DHS), we reviewed LAC+USC Medical Center's (LAC+USC) progress in meeting the requirements of the Harris-Rodde lawsuit settlements for the quarter ended June 2007. Our review indicates that LAC+USC accurately reported meeting the requirements for the quarter ending June 2007.

Background

In December 2005, the County settled lawsuits with plaintiffs Harris and Rodde regarding reducing beds at the LAC+USC replacement facility. Under the settlements, LAC+USC was allowed to immediately reduce 25 budgeted, non-psychiatric beds. LAC+USC is also allowed to reduce an additional 35 budgeted, non-psychiatric beds for each quarter LAC+USC reduces the Average Length of Stay (ALOS) by 0.3 days compared to the previous quarter (from an initial baseline of 6.5 days), and maintains a median Emergency Department Boarding Time (EDBT) under seven hours. The settlement agreements require the Auditor-Controller to verify the ALOS and EDBT when LAC+USC reports that they have met the targets. On May 16, 2007 and June 5, 2007, we reported that LAC+USC had accurately reported meeting the ALOS and EDBT requirements for the quarters ending December 2006 and March 2007,

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respectively. However, our review of the EDBTs for these two quarters was limited to the visits where LAC+USC had the documentation needed to validate compliance with the EDBT requirement. LAC+USC retained documentation for 54% of visits for the quarter ending December 2006 and 59% for the quarter ending March 2007. In May 2007, we reported that we could not determine if LAC+USC met the EDBT requirements for the quarter ending September 2006.

Review of Reported ALOS

ALOS is the average time between when patients are admitted and when they are discharged from the hospital. LAC+USC records both admission and discharge on the Hospital's Affinity computer system (Affinity). For the quarter ending June 2007, LAC+USC reported an ALOS of 5.5 days. According to County Counsel, once LAC+USC meets their target ALOS of 5.5 days, no further reductions of ALOS are required. However, LAC+USC is required to maintain the ALOS of 5.5 days for a period of four years (through December 2009).

We reviewed a random statistical sample of 154 records to determine if LAC+USC had accurately reported their ALOS. We noted that the length of stay (LOS) for two visits (1%) did not agree to the source documents we reviewed. For both visits, the patient was discharged one day earlier than was recorded in the Affinity System.

Overall, our review of the 154 visits showed an ALOS of 3.65 days, compared to 3.69 days recorded on Affinity. None of the variances noted resulted in a material change in LAC+USC's reported ALOS for the quarter ended June 2007.

Review of Reported EDBT

EDBT is the time between when a physician writes an order for a patient to be placed in an inpatient bed (pre-admit date/time) and when the patient is actually placed in the bed (ED discharge date/time). DHS and County Counsel advised us that, for purposes of verifying the reported EDBT, the pre-admit date/time should be taken from the pink copy of the Emergency Room (ER) Record (pink sheet). The ED discharge date/time is recorded in the patient's medical record. Both the pre-admit date/time and the ED discharge date/time are recorded on Affinity. For the quarter ending June 2007, LAC+USC reported a median EDBT of 4.52 hours.

In November 2006, we advised LAC+USC of the need to keep the pink sheets to allow us to validate the reported EDBT. DHS management informed us that they did not keep the pink sheets initially because they believed it would violate regulatory standards that prohibit "shadow" medical records. After discussions with County Counsel and DHS, it was determined that the facility should keep the pink sheets to help implement the settlement agreements and maintain an audit trail to corroborate the pre-admit date/time recorded on Affinity.

For the quarter ending June 2007, we selected a random statistical sample of 345 visits to determine if LAC+USC retained the pink sheets for the visits recorded on Affinity. We identified six visits (2%) that did not have a pink sheet. Extrapolating the results of our statistical sample to the entire population of visits that were required to be tracked under the Harris-Rodde settlements, we estimate that LAC+USC retained approximately 98% of the pink sheets used to document the pre-admit date/time. According to County Counsel, the plaintiffs on the settlements have requested that LAC+USC retain a minimum of 85% of the pink sheets.

The first step in validating the reported EDBT was to ensure that LAC+USC had included all visits that are subject to the EDBT requirement. We tested a random statistical sample of 103 visits that were excluded from the median EDBT calculation to determine if the visits were properly excluded from the calculation (e.g., patients who were not admitted as inpatients, or were admitted from an outpatient clinic). We noted that all visits reviewed were appropriately excluded.

We then reviewed a random statistical sample of 345 visits to verify the EDBTs reported on Affinity. We noted that the EDBT for 48 visits (14%) did not agree to the source documents we reviewed. Specifically:

- For 33 visits (10%), the source documents we reviewed showed a longer EDBT than was recorded on Affinity. The EDBT on Affinity for these 33 visits was understated by an average of 1.46 hours.
- For 15 visits (4%), the source documents we reviewed showed a shorter EDBT than was recorded on Affinity. The EDBT on Affinity for the 15 visits was overstated by an average of 2.34 hours.

Overall, our review of the 345 visits showed a median EDBT of 5.22 hours, compared to 5.12 hours recorded on Affinity. None of the variances noted resulted in a material change in the reported median EDBT for the quarter ended June 2007 for visits where pink sheets were available.

DHS and LAC+USC management were very cooperative during our review and actively participated in the review process. Please call me if you have any questions, or your staff may contact Jim Schneiderman at (626) 293-1101.

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